



IGNITING THE SPARK: COMMUNITY FOUNDATION YOUTH ENGAGEMENT MODELS

Prepared by the National Center
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The Frieda C. Fox Family Foundation

YOUTHADELPHIA, A PROGRAM OF
THE PHILADELPHIA FOUNDATION

LOCATED: Philadelphia, PA

WEBSITE: www.philafound.org

PURPOSE: We link those with financial
resources to those who serve
societal needs. Specifically, we make
Southeastern Pennsylvania better by:

- Building philanthropic resources
- Managing those resources well
- Distributing those resources
effectively.

Our grants and scholarships improve
the quality of life for all.

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YOUTHadelphia, A Program of The Philadelphia Foundation

Who Is Involved:

- High school students from a wide range of Philadelphia neighborhoods and schools.
- Adult advisors and Foundation staff support the youth.

Youth are supported by adult advisors who are hired consultants with youth development experience. These adults really let youth drive the “car” or program, while having them adhere to the “rules of the road.” The program is housed within The Philadelphia Foundation. Adult advisors meet with the Program Officer regularly; these meetings occur weekly or every other week, pending programming activity. This connection has been key to liaising between the youth and The Foundation to oversee the program and integrate The Foundation’s grantmaking expertise. Programming is also held at The Foundation with some opportunities for staff and community engagement with youth, for example, a more open session for staff and youth to connect and network or the closing grant award session that is open to the community.

History of Youth Engagement:

In 2001, The Fund For Children, a fund to support improving the quality of life for children in Philadelphia, was established thanks to contributions from the Philadelphia Eagles and the Philadelphia Phillies. Funds were provided through a lease arrangement with the City of Philadelphia when the two teams built their new stadiums. The Foundation researched community needs and found opportunities to support youth ages 12-18, and decided to target a portion of funds to support this important age group. In 2006, The Philadelphia Foundation established YOUTHadelphia to build youth leadership skills by empowering teens to give back to their community.



YOUTHadelphia's grants are currently allocated across two cohorts, with \$50,000 from each cohort for a total of \$100,000 a year or 10 percent of the Fund for Children's annual distribution. Grants have to support Philadelphia high school-aged youth and provide leadership opportunities. The priorities change based on the selection of the cohort. Grants vary from five to ten thousand dollars depending on the cycle and timing for site visits.

YOUTHadelphia is a unique youth philanthropy model, with a defined focus on mentoring among the cohort of youth, centered around the fact



that newer youth are mentored by returning youth committee members. Meeting in a board room can feel quite corporate, so each cohort sets a youth-friendly time and environment, and holds a dedicated group session on race and class issues, before starting the grant process. This has encouraged thoughtful conversations among youth across backgrounds. Two special speakers for the youth are the Board Chair and the President & CEO of The Philadelphia Foundation who participate in the opening or closing meeting. We are excited to hear more from YOUTHadelphia as their alumni youth remain engaged and excited about giving!

Current Youth Engagement Strategies:

The YOUTHadelphia program has two cohorts, such that it is held twice a year with each program lasting one semester and having some opportunities to engage with the other semester cohort. The Fall cohort typically has up to 14 youth, and up to 22 youth are engaged in the Spring. The Fund for Children awards the remaining \$900,000 per year across varied other opportunities with grant funds targeted at benefiting youth across a variety of ages. As well, The Philadelphia Foundation has a thriving scholarship program and has partnered with donors and their families across their philanthropic efforts.



Adult Perspective:

“One of YOUTHadelphia’s most important benefits for the participants is the visible change in their self-importance over time. The youth understand they are being trusted with this huge responsibility of distributing \$50,000, so not only are they seeing themselves make a difference, but the complete experience includes adults telling them that their voice matters and they are capable; this is a shift from the messaging they are normally receiving. When asked to provide an important thing learned as a result of participating in YOUTHadelphia one survey participant responded, ‘Youth can make a difference.’”

—Libby O’Donnell, Program Officer, The Philadelphia Foundation

Youth Perspectives:

“It was a fantastic learning environment. I had great fun interacting and discovering more from a diverse group of youths around me every Thursday of the week. It was an experience I would not forget—ever. If I were to rate the originality of this program, it would easily be an 11/10!”

“I cannot express how much this program meant to me as I progressed through high school. This program helped me become a more outgoing leader who wasn’t afraid of who he was anymore. Every day was a pleasure to come and was exciting to see how us (the youth) felt about the social and educational problems within our community. Under other circumstances I would’ve wished to have spent more time within this program.”

“YOUTHadelphia is one of my favorite programs I have ever been a part of. I went to a small private high school and I did not understand problems outside of my bubble. YOUTHadelphia helped me change that. I am more open minded, I am better at communicating, and I now know I want to have career in improving the world for all of us. YOUTHadelphia was my Thursday night family and I would not have had it any other way. Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to grow as a person and help my community!”

Note: all comments are from an anonymous survey of youth and alumni.



Advice to Others:

- **Believe in youth.** Giving them power to have authentic space and voice is key to the success of this grantmaking initiative and the development of the youth.
- **Consider the details.** For example, one of the most expensive but worthwhile administrative

costs for the YOUTHadelphia program has been subway tokens and dinner every Thursday. Dinner and subway tokens allow young people from varied backgrounds to participate, and everyone to be on a level playing field.



- **Learn and listen before getting started.** Researching models and conducting a listening tour of youth philanthropy programs helped The Philadelphia Foundation craft a program that fit what youth and the community wanted, while leveraging the success of youth philanthropy models. Check out other models to allow learning from others' experiences so the program can hit the ground running.

Resources to Share:

- Sample Program Timeline (on right)
- [Application for the Program](#)
- [YOUTHadelphia Video](#)

Internet Resources:

- [YAC Best Practices by Michigan Community Foundations' Youth Project Committee](#)
- [Leadership, Volunteering and Giving: A Longitudinal Study of Youth Grantmakers](#)
- [Michigan Community Foundations' Youth Project \(MCFYP\) 20th Anniversary Report](#)
- [Young Engagement Continuum](#) on Perrin Family Foundation's website from Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing
- [Changing the Face of Giving by Youth Leadership Institute, Published by The James Irvine Foundation](#)

YOUTHadelphia Spring - Timeline

All dates below are Thursdays from 4:00pm - 6:30pm, unless otherwise specified. Meetings are held at The Philadelphia Foundation

Meeting Topic/Goal

Welcome Mixer!

Pre-Assessment
Environmental Suggestions
Identify Community Needs

Identify Community Needs
Prioritizing and Selecting Community Needs to Fund

Prioritizing and Selecting Community Needs to Fund

Reflection on Priority Identifying, Priority Selection, and Advisors
Grant Writing Overview

Grant Writing Overview

Edit/Write Application Questions for RFP

Edit/Write Application Questions for RFP
Prepare for RFP Release

Prepare for RFP Release

RFP Release Event: Community Event

Reflection on Grant Writing Overview, Application Questions, Hosting the RFP, and Advisors

Diversity Discussion - Both Fall and Spring Committees Invited

Prep for Application and Site Visits
Prep to Read Applications
Team Building
Site Visit Calendars: Scheduling Preparation

Prep for Application and Site Visits
Prep to Read Applications
Team Building
Collect Calendars - Scheduling Preparation
Reflection on Due Diligence, Advisors

APPLICATIONS DUE from Organizations

READING APPLICATIONS

READING APPLICATIONS

READING APPLICATIONS

Selecting Finalists to Receive Site Visits
Confirming Availability for Site Visits

SITE VISITS

SITE VISITS

Begin Discussion of Sites: Thursday Meeting

Final Vote to Decide Funding

PREPARATION FOR CLOSING CEREMONY

Reflection on Site Visits, Voting, and Advisors
Post-Assessment
PREPARATION FOR CLOSING CEREMONY

CLOSING CEREMONY: Invite Friends & Family

